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SENSITIVE
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NEA/ARP FOR AMACDONALD; DRL FOR JBARGHOUT/JKERN; PRM FOR
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KIRF](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: NO CHANGE ON BAHAI CASE: DEPORTATION STILL
PLANNED TO COUNTRY OF THEIR CHOOSING

REF: SANAA 1521

1. (SBU) Summary: There continues to be no change in the ROYG's position vis a vis the detained Baha'is. The President has officially signed an order calling for the deportation of the four detainees to the country of their choice. UNHCR has still not been granted access to the prisoners, putting on hold the US resettlement process. End Summary

2. (SBU) Consistent with the information reported in reftel, the ROYG continues to push for the deportation of the four detained Baha'is. On September 14, lawyers and members of the Yemeni Baha'i community told Poloff that President Saleh signed an order to deport the detainees to the country of their choice. No date was specified for the deportation.

3. (SBU) Also during the September 14 meeting, lawyers of the detainees told Poloff that corruption, not religious persecution, was the cause of the arrests. The lawyers alleged that Hawk International, an oil company employing detainee Behrooz Rohani, refused to pay eight million dollars in a concession deal to relatives of the President, most notably NSB Deputy Director and Presidential nephew, Ammar Saleh. After Hawk International won its case in court, Rohani was arrested in retaliation. When Poloff asked why Rohani was targeted and why other Baha'is with no relation to the company were arrested with him, the lawyers said that as Executive Manager of Hawk International, Rohani was thought to be the "mastermind" of the deal and that others were arrested to justify Rohani's arrest under the pretext that Baha'is were proselytizing. A member of the Sana'a Baha'i community, Badiuallah Sanai, agreed that this business deal was the cause for the arrests.

4. (SBU) UNHCR senior protection officer Samer Haddadin reported to Poloff on September 15 that UNHCR has still not been granted access to the detainees. As access has not been granted, UNHCR has not provided resettlement applications to the detainees, putting the US resettlement process on hold.

5. (SBU) Comment: Post frequently hears reports of retaliatory arrests linked to (often corrupt) financial deals gone awry. While we have no evidence this is the case with the current group of detainees, it may explain why President Saleh involved himself directly in the case by signing the deportation order. Post will continue to ask the ROYG to release the arrested Baha'is, but as an interim step will also press the ROYG to grant UNHCR officials access to the prisoners. End Comment
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